




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
U.S. Census Bureau
Office of the Director
Washington, DC 20233-0001

September 24, 2021

To: James Tucker
Chair
National Advisory Committee

From: Ron S. Jarmin 
Acting Director
U.S. Census Bureau

Subject: Spring Holdover Recommendations and Comments to the U.S. Census Bureau
from the National Advisory Committee

The U.S. Census Bureau thanks the National Advisory Committee for its recommendations. We are responding to the NAC Spring Holdover Recommendations submitted during the Differential Privacy meeting on May 27, 2021.

Your feedback is welcomed to ensure that the Census Bureau continues to provide relevant and timely statistics used by federal, state, and local governments, as well as business and industry, in an increasingly technologically oriented society.

Attachment

To: Ron S. Jarmin
Acting Director
U.S. Census Bureau

From: James Tucker
National Advisory Committee (NAC) Chair

Subject: Recommendations and Comments to the Census Bureau from the National
Advisory Committee – Spring 2021 Meeting (Holdover Recommendations)

May 27, 2021

I. The Experimental Household Pulse Survey

1. The HPS asks about pandemic-related changes on training and educational attainment for adult household members that were planning or taking classes at college, university, community college, trade school, or another occupational school. A consequence of the pandemic was limitations placed on certificate and degree seeking students to obtain required, hands-on work experience through clinical practicums or internships due to employer closures, resulting in the inability to complete programs or obtain a credential.

RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends inclusion of an item in the HPS that addresses household members' inability to take part in work experience or internships needed to complete a program during the pandemic that will facilitate understanding of barriers to educational attainment.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau rejects the NAC's recommendation at this time, as the content for Phase 3.2 was approved by OMB and went into production in July. However, we will consider inclusion of an item along the lines of this recommendation in later iterations of the instrument, taking into account the need to balance all content requests and burden limitations.

2. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends inclusion of an item in the HPS that addresses household members' inability to obtain a certificate during the pandemic that will facilitate understanding of barriers to educational attainment.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau rejects the NAC's recommendation at this time, as the content for Phase 3.2 was approved by OMB and went into production in July. However, we will consider inclusion of an item related to the topic of certification in later iterations of the instrument, taking into account the need to balance all content requests and burden limitations.

3. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends adding the following measures to the HPS: Experiencing or being the target of verbal aggression and physical violence; reluctance or hesitation to seeking medical care for health issues.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau rejects the NAC's recommendation at this time, as the content for Phase 3.2 was approved by OMB and went into production in July. However, we will consider inclusion of items related to these different topics in later iterations of the instrument, taking into account the need to balance the full complement of content requests and the survey's burden limits. We appreciate these recommendations and the NAC's thoughtful consideration of the wide range of data needs associated with the pandemic's impacts.

II. Community Resilience Estimates

4. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that as research develops and the Census Bureau acquires additional data and experience in working with CREs, additional risk factors and measures, which may predict resilience, be identified for more robust estimates.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau accepts this recommendation. We are actively engaged with stakeholders to determine potential risk factors. Risk factors will continue to be tested and evaluated.

5. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Bureau examine CREs utility in developing guidelines for "distribution of resources" for both tangible and nontangible resources and, if possible, to also validate measures "to ensure equitable distribution."

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau rejects this recommendation. As a statistical agency, the Census Bureau does not make policy recommendations for other agency distribution of resources. However, we will continue to work closely with policy-making agencies in order to provide technical assistance for the products we produce.

6. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau include in the CREs other indicators that are not negatively laced.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau accepts this recommendation. We will continue to refine models as we work on risk factors. Understanding how any disaster impacts certain groups is a priority. We are analyzing if different models are required for different disasters. Do hurricanes impact certain groups more than pandemics? What about the impact of multiple disasters on a community?

7. The Census Bureau has developed a new experimental measure, the community resilience estimate (CRE), designed to identify census tracts and counties with the greatest need for response to health crises. The first iteration of this estimate largely draws upon measures

most related to aging and persons with disabilities and chronic health conditions. Persons with disabilities, limited mobility, and isolation certainly require special attention during health crises, but they are not the only populations that do. For different and additional reasons, for instance, children also require special attention. This is true for epidemiologic reasons (fetuses, infants, and toddlers often are most affected by pandemics or by exposure to toxins) and for reasons of separation and disruption (crises often have their greatest disruption to children, including separation from their parents and transferring the stress parents experience to their children as well as social, emotional, cognitive, and physical disruptions to and stresses in their own lives). In terms of overall health over the life course, some of the greatest and most long-term impacts of promoting resilience in times of crises may occur for children.

RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau undertake a comprehensive review of the CRE, including comparing the measures comprising it with other vulnerability, opportunity, and persistent poverty indices which have been constructed using ACS data at the tract level.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau accepts this recommendation. We are actively engaged in this process and are currently writing papers describing our findings.

8. **RECOMMENDATION:** The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau review the variability in the CRE and other measures both by county and by census tract and indicate the differences in the identification of high need (e.g. high social vulnerability, persistent poverty, child opportunity, community resiliency) geographies by census tract and by county.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau accepts this recommendation. We are actively engaged in this process and are currently writing papers describing our findings.

9. **RECOMMENDATION:** The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau make use of the expertise on the NAC in its actions to further develop the CRE, as well as other experts in organizations which have constructed indices from the ACS.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau accepts this recommendation. We openly seek guidance. We meet with stakeholders and experts regularly.

10. **RECOMMENDATION:** The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau use age, race, and ethnicity measures as important contextual measures in composite indices or estimates, but not as factors used in the CRE index to assess risk *per se*.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau accepts this recommendation.

11. The Census Bureau should be extremely cautious in providing names for indices or estimates which connote a condition such as resilience or vulnerability, and ensure that

the indicators used to develop it are representative and comprehensive measures for what users will infer by the use of that name.

RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau encourage users to examine the indicators making up any index or estimate as well as the index or estimate itself, making both easily available.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau accepts this recommendation. We release data as confidentiality considerations allow. We are actively working on creating a fully integrated model where all risk factors can be released. Until then, users can rely on the ACS 5-year data.

12. **RECOMMENDATION:** The NAC recommends that Census Bureau identify communities that are found to be resilient and examine what is taking place in those places that make it possible, such as social capital, community connections, policies etc.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau accepts this recommendation. The CRE team plans to identify communities at risk as well as the characteristics of this risk, limited to data availability. We are currently working with academics who want to access the data to ask a broad array of social science questions, including those listed in this question. Academics work through the Federal Statistical Research Data Centers to gain access to the microdata. Progress on this will be dependent on available resources.

13. The CRE framework and the value of the Social Vulnerability Index as a Census framework is especially useful. In many ways, you can use it as a flag for racism and systemic inequities which has been important to uncover for this administration. However, it seems very narrow to look at risk vs no. risk.

RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau include in the CREs protective/promotive factors such as access to resources, family/community support, economic/racial/ethnic integration, and high income/educated minority populations.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau partially accepts this recommendation. We will continue to test risk factors that can be measured and included in our models. We plan to perform quasi-experimental studies to test risk factors and fully understand the margins. Progress on this will be dependent on available resources.

14. **RECOMMENDATION:** The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau prepare an inventory that measures CRE vulnerability to establish short-term and long-term mitigation standard to resolve those vulnerabilities.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau rejects this recommendation. We continue to examine the data sources and inputs into the CRE and are evaluating their usefulness and continued availability.

15. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau gather input on the CRE from various stakeholders such as public, private, community, and civil rights groups to assess inclusion of resilience factors, implications of using the CRE for distributing resources equitably, and examine its effectiveness.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau partially accepts this recommendation. As a statistical agency, the Census Bureau does not make assessments regarding other agency or private distribution of resources. As a statistical agency, the Census Bureau does not make policy recommendations. However, we will continue to work closely with policy-making agencies in order to provide technical assistance for the products we produce.

III. Young Children

16. Previously, the Census Bureau has had a Task Force on the Undercount of Young Children, which worked closely with a senior staff member overseeing efforts to count young children and means to ensure counting all children are a priority across Census demographic products and the next Decennial Census. This is especially important in light of all of the funding and policies focused on young children, the early years and their family, providers, and educators.

RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau reinstate its Task Force on the Undercount of Young Children and make it a permanent structure.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau acknowledges this recommendation and will take it into consideration. We are committed to continuing to improve data collection for children in the decennial census, the American Community Survey (ACS), the Current Population Survey, and other surveys conducted by the Census Bureau.

17. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau continue to collect data on Person 5. The ACS roster is generally completed from oldest to youngest person in the household. So, the move to collect less data on Person 5 will likely impact the completeness of data for young children than on adults.

Census Bureau Response: At this time, the Census Bureau is proposing to test the impact of removing Person 5 from the paper questionnaire (other modes of data collection would not be impacted). The Census Bureau would like to clarify that removing Person 5 from the ACS paper questionnaire does not mean that data for a 5th person of the household (or beyond) would not be collected. As is currently done, large households (currently those with 6 or more people) provide basic information on the paper form and then are called back to complete the survey for those people. The Census Bureau does acknowledge that not all large households complete the follow-up interview to complete

details for everyone in their household. The purpose of this test is to understand the impact of this potential change on the data, and we will pay particular attention to the impact on data for young children.

18. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau develop and make available an additional table or tables for reporting American Community Survey at the tract, county, state, and national levels that includes information of most relevance to children and families.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau rejects the NAC's recommendation. A broad variety of ACS tables are currently available containing information on children and families. The Census Bureau is not currently planning to add additional tables. The following tables provide information on children and families: S0901, S1001, S1101, S1201, S1301, S0201, DP02, CP02, B09001, B09002, B09018, B09019, B10001, B10002, B11001, B11002, B12001, B13002.

19. RECOMMENDATION: The NAC recommends that the Census Bureau produce a report showing variations both across and within counties in terms of persistent poverty geographic areas (geographies which have experienced poverty over 20 percent in the three most recent decades) and the differences between using county and census tract information to identify such areas. The committee further recommends that the report provide additional information about those census tracts, including information of most relevance to children and families.

Census Bureau Response: The Census Bureau partially accepts the NAC's recommendation. We currently have an interactive Excel-based visualization "Historical County Level Poverty Estimates Tool," which displays county-level poverty rates from the 1960-2000 Decennial Census as well as estimates from 2010 based on 5-year data from the ACS on our website. We plan to produce a report highlighting persistent poverty areas in the near future, although census-tract level analysis will be much more challenging given changes in census tract boundaries over time.